



As we continue our journey through the Mass, we come to the **Liturgy of the Eucharist**. Growing up as an altar server, the preparation for the Liturgy of the Eucharist was always one of the most action-packed moments of the Mass. There are several things to bring to the altar and an order to how they should arrive. As we have noted, every part of the Mass has a background and a significant meaning, even some of the quick (and sometimes quiet) gestures in this part of the Mass. There are special cloths, shiny chalices, candles, bread, wine, and water, among many other things. All of them will serve a purpose, and with the words of Christ, the bread and wine will become Christ himself—his true Body and Blood—his true presence with us!

What is the Liturgy of the Eucharist?

As the *General Instruction for the Roman Missal* teaches, “At the Last Supper Christ instituted the Paschal Sacrifice and banquet, by which the Sacrifice of the Cross is continuously made present in the Church whenever the Priest, representing Christ the Lord, carries out what the Lord himself did and handed over to his disciples to be done in his memory. For Christ took the bread and the chalice and gave thanks, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take, eat, and drink: this is my Body; this is the chalice of my Blood. Do this in memory of me.’ Hence, the Church has arranged the entire celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist in parts corresponding to precisely these words and actions of Christ, namely:

- At the Preparation of the Gifts, the bread and the wine with water are brought to the altar—the same elements, that is to say, which Christ took into his hands.
- In the Eucharistic Prayer, thanks is given to God for the whole work of salvation, and the offerings become the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Through the fraction and through Communion, the faithful, though many, receive from the one bread the Lord’s Body and from the one chalice the Lord’s Blood in the same way the Apostles received them from the hands of Christ himself” (*GIRM*, 72).

The Parts of the Liturgy of the Eucharist

For an in-depth summary of the parts of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we turn to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*:

“The Liturgy of the Eucharist, the essential part of the sacrifice, includes: the preparation of the altar; the preparation of the gifts: bread, wine, and water are brought to the altar ([and in many places] the money offerings or offerings for the poor), [typically] the offertory song is sung during this preparation; the priest washes his hands; an invitation to prayer is prayed by the priest. There follows the Eucharistic prayer, which is a prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification and the center of the Eucharistic celebration. It contains: the preface, expressing thanksgiving in the name of the entire people of God; the acclamation or *sanctus* (holy, holy, holy), which is recited by the priest and people or sung, the Eucharistic prayer; the invocations for the Church, the epiclesis; narration of the institution and consecration of the bread and wine in the words of Christ; the fulfillment of the command given by Christ to the Church to carry on this mystery of the sacrifice, called the anamnesis; the offering of the victim to God the Father in the Holy Spirit; the intercessions for the living and the dead and for the faithful present; the final doxology, and concluding Amen” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, 1976, p. 197).

Now *that* is a table of contents! Although this listing may seem complex, we’ll be taking each section one at a time, breaking it down so we can understand the importance of each part in the Mass and its importance for us. As we journey through the parts of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, remind yourself that these pieces all serve a grand purpose: our pathway to the true presence of Christ on the altar at Mass!